



Cultural Debate on “Alexandria the Inspiration of Artists” At the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

Alexandria, the 16th of October – the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) has organised a cultural debate on “Alexandria, the Inspiration of Artists” last Thursday. The debate provided an open discussion, with the participation of Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Director of the BA; Dr Khaled Azab, the BA Special Projects Manager; and a number of Alexandrian intellectuals. The debate was divided into four sessions: “Culture in Alexandria: Assessment and Analysis”; “Literature in Alexandria: A vision on Literary Creativity in the Alexandrian novel, Short Story, and Poetry ”; “The Arts in Alexandria: Theatre, Cinema and the Visual Arts”; and “Publishing Experiences in Alexandria”.

An elite group of leading intellectuals, writers, critics, artists, thinkers and other figures interested in publishing also participated in the discussions.

Dr Serageldin opened the discussions with a welcoming speech, expressing his pleasure and thanks to the audience for their attendance and participation. He also provided an overview on the program “Support to Cultural Diversity and Creativity in Egypt”, which the cultural debate is part of. The program is co-funded by the European Union and orchestrated by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It seeks to develop a study which aims at fostering and developing the cultural sector in Egypt, by enhancing the access to knowledge and culture, and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions.

Dr Serageldin also pointed out that even though in the past, there were concerns over the openness which extended to the creativity in subject-matter, whether in music and dance or literature and thought, he was keen that the Bibliotheca Alexandrina continues its activities.

He also stated that last year alone, and for the first time in its history, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina organised 1142 cultural event. 700 of these events were hosted in the BA, while the rest were hosted at Bayt Al-Sinnari. Bayt Al-Sinnari, which is the Bibliotheca’s branch in



Cairo, is overseen by Dr Khaled Azab. It hosted a variety of events including special programs for women and children, and courses for Coptic studies, amongst many other. Dr Serageldin however mentioned, that through this grand project, the BA tries through a series of cultural dialogues, including this debate, to formulate a draft for a strategy which aims at promoting creativity and cultural development in Egypt, apart from politics.

He also highlighted that after it was founded in the time of Alexander the Great till the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and from 1820 to 1940, Alexandria was a stronghold for artistic creation. This cultural development which began in Alexandria, started to extend to Cairo. Meanwhile Alexandria continued to inspire cultural and artistic products, deeply influencing arts and music. Nevertheless, according to Dr Serageldin, this process needs to be more thoroughly analyzed.

